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Dianne Wampler 12/06/2006 10:48:48 AM From DB/Inbox: Dianne Wampler

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C O N F I D E N T I A L ANKARA 06585

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ACTION: POL
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E.O. 12958: DECL: 11/29/2016
TAGS: [PREL](#) [PGOV](#) [TU](#) [US](#)
SUBJECT: TURKEY: EXPANDING OPPOSITION HORIZONS
PRE-ELECTION: GETTING THEM TO WASHINGTON

Classified By: Ambassador Ross Wilson, reasons 1.4 (b), (d)

¶1. (SBU) Prior to Turkey's 2007 parliamentary elections, it is time to expand to Washington our outreach to Turkish opposition leaders. Two, three or perhaps more are likely to be in the next government and they need to start to understand the realities and challenges of the relationship first hand. End summary.

¶2. (SBU) Peering around the corner at Turkey in 2007, parliamentary elections that must take place by November are likely to result in a coalition government. The math is simple: Only two parties overcame Turkey's 10% threshold in 2002, handing both the ruling Justice and Development Party (AKP) and the Republic People's Party (CHP) parliamentary seats disproportionate to their actual electoral strength. Two other parties -- the True Path Party (DYP) and the Nationalist Action Party (MHP) -- came very close but failed to make it over the 10% threshold. The result has been over four years of one-party AKP government.

¶3. (C) Chances are excellent that one, if not both, DYP and MHP will join AKP and CHP in parliament a year from now. AKP and CHP remain likely to take the two largest chunks, making DYP and MHP the potential king-makers. If AKP forms the next government, its most likely partner would be Mehmet Agar's DYP. For the CHP to take power, it would logically turn to Devlet Bahceli's MHP, or even attempt a coalition of all AKP rivals.

¶4. (C) CHP and MHP in particular often tout an anti-American (and even anti-EU) line that is gaining in strength as elections near. It is opportunist politics. Now is the time for us to (a) engage these parties more forcefully and (b) give them a sense of what it feels like to bear the

responsibilities of dealing on the world stage.

¶15. (SBU) We of course have frequent working level contacts in Ankara, Istanbul, Adana, as well as in the course of our travels around the country. In the new year, we will be renewing and intensifying our outreach efforts here in Turkey. We also intend to continue to include opposition party representatives when USG officials come to consult on regional issues such as Iran, Iraq or the Caucasus.

¶16. (C) This is a crucial time for Turkey and this region. For opposition leaders, we propose leveraging greater exposure to the U.S. and U.S.-based NGOs and think tanks. Opposition figures from other major allies do this regularly. One such possibility would be via Brookings, which we understand is planning to bring Turkish NGO and think tank reps to Washington. This would have the dual advantage of exposing these leaders to the U.S. and different circles in Washington and vice versa. The Washington Institute is another option, and we may be able to involve groups such as the German Marshall Fund and American Turkish Council (ATC) to help as well. ATC, for example, could at a minimum invite opposition party representatives, along with GOT officials, to its annual conference in late March. Programs should ideally also include meetings on the Hill, as well as with State Department and other agency officials as available. This sort of exposure will prepare us mutually for the next iteration of democratically elected government in Ankara, just as it teaches them first-hand about our system and our priorities.

¶17. (C) Parties here may not be universally receptive, at least initially. Their bread and butter -- especially CHP and MHP -- has been bashing the U.S. It is all too easy to complain, without providing an alternative vision, when a party is in opposition. It is harder to do so once in power and dealing with regional realities. The earlier Turkey's opposition leaders have a first-hand sense of how those realities play in Washington (and in Brussels and London, for example), the fewer the bumps in their initial foreign policy leadership roads. If one goes and enjoys a good program, others may feel irresistible pressure to follow. It is important that these programs be non-partisan and all-inclusive.

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